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NAMIBIA — A U.N. TRUST FULFILLED: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

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NAMIBIA — A U.N. TRUST FULFILLED: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

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NARRATOR: Perspective, on an issue of international concern. In this edition, Namibia -- A U.N. Trust Fulfilled: Looking to the Future.

Cut 1
Sound Effects
Namibian Independence
Celebrations -
21 March 1990
Windhoek (Namibia)

A Kenyan officer is holding the rope. He still hoists the Namibian flag... They are saluting the flag... and it will be raised by three Namibian officers... (loud applause).... President Sam Nujoma looks up and there it is! (applause)...

NARRATOR: And that's the way it was, March 21, 1990, Namibia that last bastion of colonialism in Africa finally achieving its independence.

The United Nations Secretary-General - the man who swore-in the first President of Namibia, Sam Nujoma, and who had made the Namibian issue one of his highest priorities - Mr. Perez de Cuellar described the historic event as a moment of triumph:

Cut 2
Sec.General
Perez de Cuellar
ibid

The whole world, especially Africa, rejoices with Namibia for Africa and indeed... (applause) and indeed for the principles that are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The independence of Namibia also marks the triumph of the international rule of law. The achievement bears eloquent testimony to the strength of the norms of democracy and human rights.

NARRATOR: So Namibia is now independent, but with that independence comes the task of nation-building in earnest.

The Cabinet of the Republic consists of a President, Prime Minister and 16 Ministers. The national policy is founded on reconciliation. Its foreign policy says the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Theo-Ben Gurirab, is still evolving:

Cut 3
Gurirab
UN Radio
Interview
28 March 1990
Windhoek (Namibia)

But it's a foreign policy that would be based on the principle of non-alignment. The underlying principle of our foreign policy would be acceptance of the Charter of the United Nations and also acceptance of the rule of law internationally; a respect of international agreements; adherence to treaty commitments; acceptance of the principle of independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity of states and sovereign equality, indeed of states large and small, according to the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations.

NARRATOR: And that's not all:

Cut 4
Gurirab
ibid

We are an African country, no doubt, we will seek membership of the OAU and we would start off in our foreign policy pursuits, with defining our role among the countries of the southern African region, by joining these groupings, by working out practical ways in which we can cooperate economically in terms of trade and in terms of cooperating with them for security considerations. We, therefore, see our foreign policy, particularly in the context of the rapidly changing international relations, to be one that will be inspired for promoting peace and cooperation in the world.

NARRATOR: As an independent country, Namibia — a country of over one million people, Africans, White settlers and Coloureds — has a new flag. Its colours are Blue, White, Red and Green with a Golden Sun. Its new Constitution has been described as a model of democratic principles. Establishing a democracy, however, goes beyond the symbols of political independence.

The government of this new nation now has to pick up the pieces from the legacies of a colonial administration. It must chart its own course not only to consolidate its political independence but also to adopt sound economic policies for the development of the country. What then are the challenges facing Namibia? What are the priorities of the government? And how does it plan to deal with these issues? Prime Minister Hage Geingob says Namibia's historical situation is part and parcel of the challenges ahead:

Cut 5
Geingob
UN Radio
Interview
30 March 1990
Windhoek (Namibia)

We are inheriting a system of apartheid. Namibia was controlled by an apartheid system. So you have basically three or two societies in one country. You have the Africans who are at the bottom, the Coloureds - as we call them in our situation - in-between - and the Whites on top. That's a reality that we are inheriting. That in itself is the biggest challenge ever. Very few countries inherited a situation like that.

NARRATOR: And the challenge in economic terms is a major one. President Sam Nujoma:

Cut 6
Pres. Nujoma
Namibian Independence
Celebrations -
21 March 1990
Windhoek (Namibia)

We have inherited a lop-sided and underdeveloped economy... One of the most crippling legacies of colonialism is Namibia's mass unemployment. More than 30 percent of our workforce is unemployed and an even larger number is under-employed. This robs so many Namibian families of the chance to live a decent life.

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Cut 6
Pres. Nujoma
(Cont'd)

In addition, we rely heavily on imported foodstuffs, such as, maize, rice and most of our fruits come from outside Namibia.

This large import bill causes higher prices, increases our budget deficit and deprives us of jobs in the agricultural sector. Most, if not all of this food can be grown right here on Namibian soil. In our fertile northern regions, unemployment is particularly higher and work opportunities are few.

NARRATOR: The Prime Minister, Hage Geingob, also sees mass unemployment as a major challenge to the government. But he also puts his finger on another problem:

Cut 7
Geingob
UN Radio
Interview
30 March 1990
Windhoek (Namibia)

You have homelessness. People have been uprooted from their traditional homes. Some had to flee, because of the war situation, into Windhoek and they live in what is called "Singles Quarters". These are all eye-sores. So the provision of decent houses is a number two priority. Then the whole redistribution of resources which is not an easy task — that's long-term but you must address it immediately also. So these are basic challenges of any government but ours are special because of the apartheid nature of the system we are inheriting.

NARRATOR: There are, of course, other problems related, for example, to education, water-supply and health. Yet as daunting as these problems might seem, the government is confident that Namibia has the potential to overcome them. President Nujoma explains how:

Cut 8
Pres. Nujoma
Namibian Independence
Celebrations -
21 March 1990
Windhoek (Namibia)

We forsee our nation developing large-scale commercial farming. This will create more jobs and produce agricultural goods which have a great potential not only to feed our people, but also for export.

For the immediate future, we encourage people to remain on the land to pursue subsistence farming. The government stands ready to help through a variety of means, such as, our agricultural extension services, provisions for better equipment, training, transport and marketing.

NARRATOR: But the President also tempers this confidence with reality:

Cut 9
Pres. Nujoma
ibid

Our raw materials are exported in an unprocessed form. We need to process our own diamonds, beef, karakul, fish and so on, thus serving our local markets and exporting to the world. The fishing industry alone has tremendous potential for expanding into new enterprises like canning and marketing. This is crucial for job creation and increased national revenue.

NARRATOR: Namibia's fishing industry is based in Walvis Bay, a major harbour serving the country. But the status of this Bay is still uncertain. South Africa maintains that Walvis Bay is an integral part of its own territory even though this claim has been rejected by the United Nations. Article 1 of the new Namibian Constitution says that Walvis Bay is a part of the country. Nevertheless, in the hope that Walvis Bay will revert to Namibian control, the Foreign Minister, Theo-Ben Gurirab says such a move will be beneficial not only to the region but to the outside world as well:

Cut 10
Gurirab
UN Radio
Interview
28 March 1990
Windhoek (Namibia)

The whole of southern Africa, certainly Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe -- all the countries that are members of SADCC stand to benefit from the Port of Walvis Bay reverting back to Namibia. It would play a very important role in terms of the economic development projects that are already in the pipeline because we would open-up the region further to the outside world and this is very important for Namibia and indeed for the region as a whole.

NARRATOR: According to President Nujoma, the mining sector will also play an important role in promoting industrialization:

Cut 11
Pres. Nujoma
Namibian Independence
Celebrations -
21 March 1990
Windhoek (Namibia)

While Namibia is the fifth most important mining country in Africa and 17th in the world, unlike in the past when no single mining corporation was owned wholly or partially by Namibians, it is now time for the Namibian business community to participate in this vital sector.

We call on companies investing in Namibia to be good corporate citizens; to respect the workers' health and welfare; to protect our precious environment in extracting resources; and, to invest more of their profits in the development of our nation.

NARRATOR: But, of course, Namibia will not be able to do everything on its own. It will need capital and technical know-how from abroad as well as private investment. The President has given assurances that the government is committed to a mixed economy:

Cut 12
Pres. Nujoma
ibid

In this regard, we look forward to a good partnership between the state and the private sector, because only through working together will our economy prosper. The state will increase investment into the development of water, energy and road infrastructures. These are critical for mining and other industries. The government seeks to enter into joint ventures with the private sector in the areas of fishing, large-scale farming and agro-industries.

However, we want to ensure a more dynamic role for the private sector. This sector should be an engine for growth and prosperity. We shall eliminate the laws which have long limited access to private sector production for the majority of Namibian households.

NARRATOR: This is the agenda the independent Republic of Namibia has set itself. The goverment does not underestimate the difficulties ahead and the President has called on all Namibians to help tackle these goals in the spirit of national reconciliation, unity and progress. The UN Secretary-General has pledged the support of the United Nations while the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity has called for all-round support:

Cut 13
Pres. Mubarak
ibid

Let us pledge ourselves to stand beside the Namibian people as they confront the new challenges ahead. Let us call upon all friendly nations to extend the hand of friendship and cooperation to the independent Namibia.

NARRATOR: President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Chairman of the OAU ending this edition of Perspective, produced by the international staff of United Nations Radio. This is Steve Whitehouse.